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STATINT
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THE PASSING SCENE

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CIA Held Too Well Publicized

UNITED NATIONS, N. Y.—As any old Kipling reader knows, espionage, or "intelligence," was called "The Game." And a very secret business it was. A man in "The Game" might be found dead in one of India's many drainage ditches, or bloated in one of her wells. But, no matter, he was dead and there was no official inquiry into it beyond the perfunctory one of the police.

This was quite understood by all those in the great enterprise of discovering what the enemy or the subversive elements within the British Raj in India were about. So it went in the day when Kim, the Moslem horse Trader, and the fat pundit, disguised as an herb doctor, were persuading the old Buddhist priest to go into the mountain passes where the two hunters, one from Russia and the other from France, were showing a vast interest in maps and discontented small rajahs.

And so it has remained to this day. We have some Russian spies in our prisons. But, the Soviets have never so much as looked their way. The British have lost a frogman who was doing a little underwater swimming about a visiting ship from the USSR. But, since he was a figure in The Game, he was never claimed.

CIA Well Known

The bungled business in Cuba, which needlessly killed a number of very brave men, reminds us that our game has been subject to the same sort of ~~gross~~ treatment given our show stars, and the public has become accustomed to soap operas in which our spies always outdo the wicked ones who are against us. The CIA has been given the lacquer of publicity. Instead of being an unknown agency it is well-known. Allen Dulles is as familiar to the American people as is J. Edgar Hoover, whose FBI is not secret. We have, by our peculiar genius for bad-taste publicity, made the CIA into something it was not supposed to be, and should not be. It ought to have remained a secret agency. Its existence could not have been unknown, but it very well could, and should, have remained undiscussed.

The Congress, or at least some of the more obtuse members of that body, are in larger measure responsible for the idiocy which has projected the Central Intelligence Agency into the national consciousness almost as much as the Farm Bureau or any one of the armed services. There have always been a few members of legislative houses in Washington

who wanted to be Little Jack Horner putting their finger into pies and saying, "What a bright boy am I." Usually, it was some House member who wanted to make an impression of economy back home.

So, when the CIA budget, hopefully was presented with quiet requests for no public attention, these exhibitionists balked. They said their little pieces about it being the people's money and having a right to demand information. There was a time when some of the more witless actually sought to have public hearings with Director Dulles and his aides under official subpoena. Fortunately, common sense men were able to persuade the instigators of this incredible folly to cease, but they never really desisted from noting the budgets and focusing public attention on the large amounts requested.

The public image of the CIA, and what seems to have been the assumption of duties not properly connected with counter intelligence, such as planning the invasion, were certainly among the factors contributing to the first knockdown experienced by Jack Kennedy in his presidential career. The Joint Chiefs of Staff are obliged to have been yet another contributor to the planning. They must have endorsed, or at least did not reject, the invasion plans. Whether such action was official or not is beside the point.

Task for President

Because of these, and other influences, the Nation saw the young President getting up after the knockdown, with a symbolic cut over one eye and blood on his cheek. He must now busy himself with the return bout. And a part of this will be giving the back of his hand to some person in the CIA and possibly on the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He must also see to it that the intelligence agency retires from the spotlight.

This will mean an order for all hands to button their lips. This will cause some protests from some of the news people about their rights. It will hardly be a deprivation of news if the President takes a few persons to the official woodshed, rear strap in hand.

There is not yet total danger, which Nikita Khrushchev said was necessary for free societies to attain unity. But there is a grave crisis, which may mean this, too, calls for less talk. And it stamps as wise and prudent the President's talks with the Masters Eisenhower, Nixon and Goldwater. Conditions are strained enough to require as much political unity as may be had.